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FROM: Tripoli

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 377, January 28, 10 a.m.

SENT DEPARTMENT 377 REPEATED INFORMATION LONDON 68, BENGHAZI UNNUMBERED.

Reference: EMBTEL 374, having previously discussed tactics at my office, British Ambassador Graham met with Foreign Office Under Secretary Jerbi at British Embassy residence late yesterday afternoon. Graham opened conversation by stressing embarrassment and inconvenience to British that would result from proposal at this late date postpone ceremony. It might unfortunately be construed as deliberate affront in face of generous gift. I entered conversation with flat statement that thanks to cooperative British attitude I was satisfied that US requirements in terms identification with joint gift would be fully met by my presence in principal role as reviewing officer and by speeches which Prime Minister, British Ambassador and I would make stressing that donation was joint Anglo-American effort support Libyan aspirations for internal security and political stability. I added that Libyan true motives this proposal would necessarily be questioned in London and Washington and that Libya's traditional friends in those two capitals might well wonder whether Libya was having change of heart in face Soviet pressures. The damage done by such doubts would be large and perhaps irremediable. I asked Jerbi bluntly whether he had any reason to suppose that his government questioned US integrity and intention make good US share joint arms grant. Jerbi replied emphatically that thought had never entered its collective head. Jerbi then stated he would transmit our views immediately to Prime Minister and inform us of Prime Minister's decision.

Later same evening Jerbi telephoned Graham to say that Prime Minister agreed that ceremony should take place as scheduled with none of restrictions noted EMBTEL 374. Primary objective has been attained. True reasons behind proposal remain unclarified and will be viewed by us here as "straw in wind". Meanwhile, failure Washington inform me firm date arrival American equipment increasingly compromising my bargaining position.

TAPPIN

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